



IN TOUCH

Interruptions

If you are weary of battling interruptions at work, try these interruption “interrupters:”

- 1) Tell co-workers that you are having difficulty with interruptions and what you will do to prevent interruptions. Then, follow through.
- 2) For employees who knock on your door or come to your cubicle and ask, “Got a minute?” use your calendar to schedule an appointment if it is not urgent. If it is urgent, stand during the conversation. This should send a signal that the conversation will be brief.
- 3) Comfortable chairs invite visitors. They’re nice, but if you are desperate, remove them, make them unavailable or replace them with less comfortable furniture.
- 4) Close your office door to discourage visitors. If you work in a cubicle, post a “Do not disturb” or a “Available at 3 p.m.” sign at your entryway whenever you want uninterrupted time.
- 5) Be honest. Interruptions are first cousins of procrastination, so be honest about interruptions and your use of them to avoid work.

It's Coming—Midlife!

Can you avoid the much-discussed midlife crisis? Although it has been called a “creature of the imagination,” and research disputes its existence, planning for it can make getting “over the hill” a little easier.

- 1) Accept midlife as a time of transition and tool for personal growth. You are moving from thinking about the years you have lived, to how you want to live in the years ahead of you.
- 2) Plan ahead to avoid regrets by renegotiating the balance between time devoted to family versus the time you have invested achieving vocational and financial security.
- 3) Think about your values and use them to guide you in acting on tough decisions. Examples include improving a marital relationship or relationships with children before they are grown, or engaging in new leisure or recreational activities.
- 4) Plan for future challenging life events to reduce their stressful impact (e.g., care of aging parents, gradual erosion of personal health, financial security in retirement, etc.).

Midlife can stimulate the emergence of desires and impulses that have been unmet or unacceptable until now. Acting to satisfy some of these wants can add meaning to your life while others may not be consistent with your values despite their appeal.



Helping people lead healthier lives

Coping with Organizational Change

If you face dramatic organizational change this year, you can better manage the shock by understanding a bit of human psychology on your journey to the new status quo. Many change experts observe that employees—comfortable with the routines and relationships they have depended upon for years—experience letting go and acceptance of a new status quo in stages similar to the death of a loved one.

- 1) This “grief response” begins with denial. (“I don’t believe this!”) Sudden change is a shock to your system, and learning of it causes disbelief.
- 2) The second stage is anger. (“How can they do this to me?”) You may not own your job, but you own a routine. When that changes, anger is the result.
- 3) Depression. (“Things will never be the same again.”) Feeling helpless in the face of loss is what you have been trying to avoid in #1 and #2 above. But now that you are there, turning the corner to a brighter future is possible.
- 4) Taking the steps necessary to feel good again. (“Okay, so what happens now?”) Human beings are strong and adaptable. We want to feel good about the future.
- 5) Acceptance. (“Okay, let’s roll!”) Feeling excited about change does not come easy or overnight. However, taking the steps to get involved in the change is the only way to feel better about the change.

Roth IRAs for Kids

Do you wish your children could start saving for retirement long before you did? It may be possible with a Roth IRA. And it may help them learn the art of saving money early. Minors can’t put their allowance in a Roth IRA, but they can invest money earned from jobs such as babysitting, mowing lawns, chores, etc. Talk to your financial advisor about tax issues and how to set up a Roth IRA. Find a kid-friendly mutual fund or broker who will permit you to cosign for it, and be sure meticulous records are kept of earnings.

Don’t Suffer with Shyness

If you suffer from shyness, you know it. You lack confidence in social situations, feel nervous around those you don’t know (especially someone you want to date), and may get angry with yourself after social engagements wishing you had said something you didn’t think of at the time. Shyness is extreme self-consciousness with a focus on why you are feeling shy. Shyness does not have to interfere with achieving professional and interpersonal goals. Relief is found by challenging habits of thinking and believing, and learning new behaviors that focus externally on the social environment rather than internally on your fear, anxiety and social performance. Helpful resources exist, and the EAP can refer you to them.

No Hangover? Not Good...

While there is nothing fun about a hangover, you should be concerned if you have the ability to consume large quantities of alcohol with little or no adverse effects. Research shows that individuals who don’t experience hangovers after heavy drinking may be inclined to drink more heavily over time and thus have a susceptibility to alcoholism.

Spring Cleaning: Simplifying Life

The onset of spring can be invigorating—prompting you to create a fresh start by clearing out mental and physical “junk” or what is not absolutely necessary. Simplifying generally refers to taking inventory of your life, family, goals and dreams. Here are a few tips which can help just about anyone on the quest for simplicity.

Time Management—Slow Down

Will it really matter if you don't go to every dinner party or potluck that comes around, or if your child isn't involved in after-school art, sports, AND music? Learn to recognize the things that really have an impact on your life, and let the other things go without feeling guilty.

Money—Live Below Your Means

Most importantly, stay out of debt. We have a consumer culture with the newest trend, technology, and toy at every corner, which makes it easy to find yourself buried in monthly bills. Start by identifying and eliminating the monthly costs you and your family are willing to do without, such as satellite television, renting a movie rather than going to the cinema, etc. The money saved can then go toward paying off debt, such as credit card bills. Then, identify and eliminate the big things you and your family are willing to do without—one car instead of two, moving into a smaller house, etc. Of course, the occasional indulgence is much deserved, but in most cases, try not to make purchases—big or small—if they are not absolutely necessary.

Organization—Create Space

Nothing speaks of simplicity like a clean and clutter-free home. Make it a ritual to have every household member go through their room on a weekly or monthly basis and clear out unwanted items. Immediately donate the items, take them to a

consignment store, or have a yard sale, but try not to keep storing the items in different areas of your home—like the garage.

Relationships—Prioritize

In a society that, at times, expects you to be super-parent, world's best friend, vital community member, and an employer's most dedicated employee, it makes it hard to feel satisfied with any contribution to a personal or professional relationship. The key is to prioritize relationships much like a personal negotiation—can you spend 15 minutes less on household chores in order to spend a few minutes talking with your child or spouse about the day? Is it possible to not join your employer's holiday party planning committee and use the time to learn a new skill? Sometimes it is necessary to say “Not now, perhaps another time,” which can be difficult, but you will ultimately have more time to spend with those who need it most, including yourself.

Household Duties—Share the Burden

For some, sharing household duties conjures a 'been there, tried that' mentality, but if you can stick with it, it can ease stress and create a more harmonious home for everyone. Try a rotating chore chart or a monthly “auction” of chores so that everyone feels they have a voice in the matter and share an equal contribution.

Get Out of a Rut—Seek Change

Simplifying can often be about finding a renewed purpose in life. It can mean looking for a new career, taking up a new hobby, or even changing your perspective and attitude. Sometimes, change can be difficult to accept or to put into motion—seeking out support from friends, family, or a counselor can help keep you on track to reach your goal.

Family Health Talk

Health care professionals have known for a long time that common diseases—heart disease, cancer, and diabetes—and even rare diseases—like hemophilia, cystic fibrosis and sickle cell anemia—can run in families. If one generation of a family has high blood pressure, it is not unusual for the next generation to have similarly high blood pressure. Tracing the illnesses suffered by your blood relatives can help your doctor predict the disorders to which you may be at risk and take action to keep you and your family healthy. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has released a new, free software program that will organize your family health information to help you determine whether you or someone in your family is at higher risk for a disease. The new computerized tool, called “My Family Health Portrait,” can be downloaded at www.hhs.gov/familyhistory. The idea is to get families talking so they can identify common diseases that may run in the family. The tool creates a printout that can be shared with your family members and your doctor. The tool also creates a graphical

picture of your family’s generations and their health disorders. This is a powerful tool for predicting any illnesses for which you should be checked. For a print copy of the tool, write: My Family Health Portrait, HHS, Pueblo, CO 81009.

On Thanksgiving, many families gather and so this holiday has been declared National Family History Day by the U.S. Surgeon General. It is an ideal time for families to talk about, write down and exchange information about health problems that seem to run in their families.

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
www.hhs.gov/familyhistory

To speak with an EAP professional,
please call:

800.765.0770